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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (12/04): PALESTINIANS: ISRAEL
"SOLELY RESPONSIBLE" FOR SETTLER VIOLENCE

Main Stories:

Citing Israeli daily Maariv, Al Quds leads with recommendations from U.S. foreign policy experts to president-elect Obama, including: freezing Israeli settlement activity; recognizing Hamas within the Palestinian political system by assisting Egypt and Saudi Arabia in forming a Fatah-Hamas Palestinian Authority coalition government; focusing on the Syrian peace track; accepting a nuclear Iran via direct U.S.-Iran negotiations. The report reveals that the 233-page document was developed by a team of experts including the head of the Saban Center, former U.S. Ambassador to Israel Martin Indyk and Richard Haass, head of the Council on Foreign Relations.

All front pages cite Israeli daily The Jerusalem Post in reporting that the Israeli army rejects the idea, promoted by NSC chief nominee General Jones, that NATO troops deploy to the West Bank after an Israeli withdrawal. The article notes that Israel has long argued that the Palestinian Authority must contain militants, while Palestinians complain that they cannot in good faith ask militias to disarm as long as Israel occupies the West Bank and East Jerusalem. A NATO force, Obama's advisors argue, would bridge the impasse, the article concludes.

Al Quds' and Al Ayyam's front pages report that Hamas and other Palestinian factions in Gaza are not leaning towards extending the truce with Israel that ends on December 19. The paper adds, citing Israeli daily Maariv, that a senior Israeli source describes the situation in Gaza as "very volatile" and warns that if a Palestinian rocket attack inflicts Israeli casualties, a massive Israeli military offensive into the Gaza Strip would be inevitable.

Al Quds' front page reports that Palestinian Authority salaries could not be disbursed by banks in Gaza on December 4. Banks were closed, due to lack of funds caused by Israel's block on dollar and shekel transfers to the banks. All papers note that Gaza crossings

remain closed for the fourth consecutive week. Al Quds quotes UNRWA's Operations Director John Ging commenting that those in the international community, "not helping us, should feel ashamed." Al Ayyam's front page reports that British Prime Minister Brown announced on December 3 that he will meet with Israeli Premier Olmert and Palestinian Authority President Abbas in London on December 15th to discuss making progress in the peace process in 2009. The paper adds, citing Reuters, that Middle East Quartet Envoy Tony Blair stated that president-elect Obama has formed a strong national security team and that he is confident that Obama will waste no time in dealing with the Middle East peace issue. Blair noted that as long as Gaza remains separate from the West Bank, the peace process cannot move forward and the West Bank and Gaza must form one Palestinian state.

Al Ayyam leads and all dailies front page news on continued Israeli settler violence in Hebron, where a Palestinian woman and her child were injured and attempts were made to set fire to three Palestinian homes. Al Ayyam runs a lead photo of Hebron settlers being guarded by Israeli military, while Al Hayat Al Jadida leads with a photo of a Hebron Palestinian youth kicking a burning tire in protest of the settler occupied Rajabi house in Hebron. In related news, Al Hayat Al Jadida's front page reports that Fatah legislator Hatim Abdul Qader fears that a terrorist organization run by Israeli settlers in the West Bank now exists. In Jerusalem, all papers report that a Palestinian youth was seriously wounded by "settlers" in a December 3 stabbing attack in Jerusalem.

All dailies front page official reactions to settler violence. Palestinian Authority(PA) President Abbas reiterates calls on Israel to stop settler attacks, asserting that Israel is solely responsible for settler vandalism. Abbas reveals that the PA is lobbying

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several countries to halt settler "aggression" that continues, "not only in Hebron, but throughout the West Bank." Al Ayyam adds that Israeli Premier Olmert and President Peres criticized settler attacks, while the Israeli Foreign Minister stated that Israel cannot tolerate settlers turning Hebron into a, "wild west." Al Ayyam's inside page reports that diplomatic mission chiefs and representatives of 22 European countries paid a solidarity visit to Hebron on December 3 and met with the Hebron Mayor.

Al Ayyam's front page reports that the Israeli military demolished the Palestinian home of a family of five in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Silwan and attacked an elderly woman living in the house, putting her in the hospital. The paper runs a front page photo of the house being demolished.

Al Hayat Al Jadida leads with, and all papers front page AFP news about EU legislators postponing a vote on upgrading Israel-EU relations, in protest of the Israeli "siege" on Gaza. The papers quote EU Parliament Vice President Morgantini stating, "it's time for Israel to stop thinking that it is above [international] legitimacy." The papers also quote Palestinian Authority Premier Fayyad expressing satisfaction over the EU protest.

The dailies carry brief front page coverage on the signing of an economic and technical cooperation agreement between China and the Palestinian Authority in the amount of \$5 million on December 3. Citing a WAFA story, the coverage also notes a meeting between President Abbas and Liu Yunshan, member of the Communist Party of China, and a separate meeting between Fayyad and the Chinese official.

BLOCK QUOTES:

1) Al Quds' editorial is titled, "The Israeli Government is responsible for the settlers' acts"(12/04): "No one believes that the Israeli Government is unable, if it really wants to, to stop these [settler] acts and bullying... European public opinion, in particular, is expected to shift [more pro-Palestinian], while the U.S. is preoccupied with the change in administrations... the Israeli Government must play a more responsible role, as it has tried to do by arresting 20 settlers when they tried to occupy a [Palestinian] house in Hebron."

2) Abdullah Awwad opines in Al Ayyam under the title, "The third

war... the settlers' war"(12/04): "Many [Palestinian] decision makers don't have a map of the West Bank on their desks, and if they do have one, they don't have any pencils to trace what is left of Palestinian land as they make the painful discovery that there is no land left on which to establish a state, not to mention implement autonomous rule... all that is left [of the land] is a geographic and demographic mosaic connected by tunnels and roads. But don't look through your car windows to your right or to your left, for you will need a permit to look at the passing Israeli Territories!!!"
Wallles